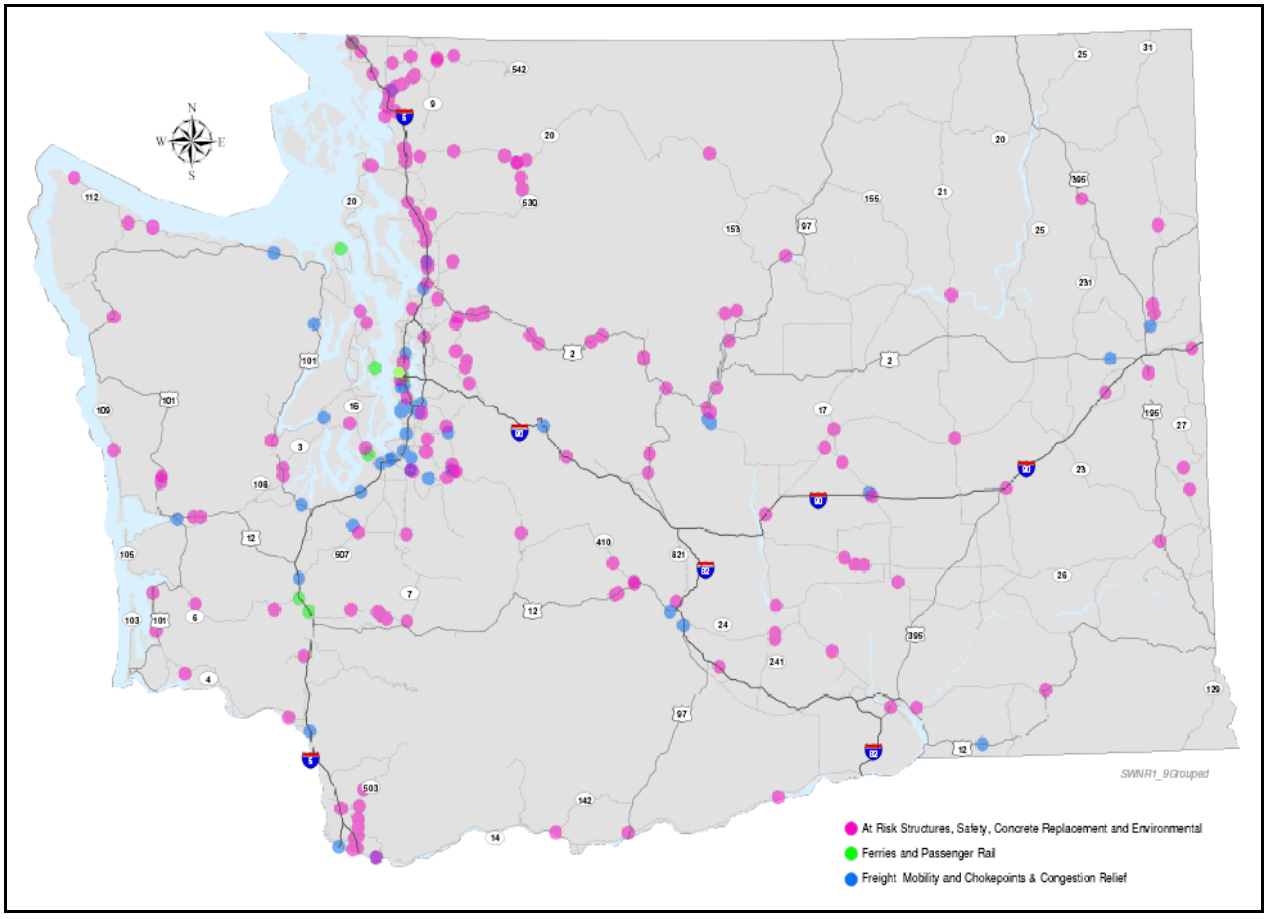
The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005

Saving Lives, Moving People, Delivering Goods

A sixteen year investment package to improve the safety of our roadways,
to protect our investment in roads and bridges,
and to improve the Washington economy.



Representative Edward Murray, Chair
House Transportation Committee

April 11, 2005

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Saving Lives, Moving People, Delivering Goods

In 2000, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation identified many faults with our transportation system, and recommended eighteen areas of improvement to rebuild public trust, engage the private sector in a transportation partnership, and get our state moving again.

Five years later, most of those recommendations have been adopted, and strict accountability standards are in place. Performance audits of the Department of Transportation and all significant projects are moving ahead. Workplace efficiencies have been implemented. There's a greater role for private sector investment. It's easier to get needed permits while still protecting the environment. And critical new transportation investments have been made across the state.

The 2003 Nickel Package was the first major transportation investment in 13 years. This $4 billion package made sizable investments in congestion relief and projects addressing safety and preservation needs. We've already completed significant work on I-405, SR 500 in Vancouver, improved freight mobility on I-90 near Cle Elum, and scores of other projects are underway for the upcoming construction season.

But this was only intended to be a first step. Much remains to be done.

Earthquakes, population and economic growth, an aging infrastructure and safety problems contribute to huge unmet state and local needs. The Blue Ribbon Commission identified $50 billion in unmet needs over the next 20 years; the Nickel Package addressed just $4 billion.

At-risk facilities

Bridges and roads all over Washington pose a public safety risk if not fixed. The Alaskan Way Viaduct and the 520 floating bridge are a tremor away from shutdown or collapse. Should either of these structures fail, the loss of life and disruption to our economy would be devastating. Across the state, 139 bridges have load restrictions because they're old and damaged, and need to be replaced. Another 800 bridges need "seismic retrofits": they need to be shored up so their columns and foundations don't crumble in an earthquake.

Safety improvements

Scores of simple safety projects across the state could save lives, if we had the money for them. These include improvements at dangerous intersections, cable guard rails on divided highways, pedestrian safety projects, and projects to reduce accidents in high accident locations.

Preservation needs

Concrete pavement on our interstate highways is crumbling, as anyone who drives I-5 or I-90 knows. Work is needed to preserve our bridges, rather than replace them later at a higher cost.

Local transportation needs

The transportation crisis is also a local crisis. Cities and counties have seen expenses rise while state and local funding has been cut. Pavement is deteriorating and potholes are getting deeper. Basic repair and maintenance budgets are underfunded. Population growth and business development create additional pressures for new investments.

Ferry system

For people who live on islands and peninsulas, bridges and ferries are their state highways. Efficient movement of people across the water is part of the core mission of the state transportation agency. A multi-modal transportation system is just as important on water as it is on land, to ensure efficient movement of people.

Public transportation

Some congestion and access problems can be solved without building new roads or adding lanes; rather, improved public transportation often is the most efficient and cost effective solution. Incentives to encourage people to use public transportation is an effective way to address transportation problems.

The solution: Regional reforms, new revenues, innovative financing, and improved accountability.

Solving these problems requires a joint effort by federal, state and local level governments, the business community, and the traveling public. It means raising the money to fund the critical projects and transportation alternatives. This includes the gas tax, vehicle weight fee and other traditional revenue sources. The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 invests $9 billion raised with a 9.5¢ gas tax increase, sensible weight fees, and small fee increases to reflect the cost of service provided.

But these alone cannot provide enough revenue to build, operate, preserve and maintain the system. Innovative financing tools are needed to augment traditional funding methods that are no longer sufficient to meet the state's critical needs. Also, tolls must be part of the long-term solution.

The solution also demands reform. We must find ways of doing business more efficiently, and be more accountable to the public. We must allow the Governor to appoint the state's transportation chief, the Secretary of Transportation, so she can hold him accountable. We must continue to insist on performance audits. We must fix the ill-conceived regional transportation investment district that has failed to bring the Central Puget Sound together in support of a regional tax package complementing state investments. And we must consolidate the multitude of transportation agencies to integrate transportation planning, finance, construction and service.

Over the last four years, the Washington Department of Transportation has demonstrated they can work faster and better with less money. The 2003 Nickel Package proved that the public will support new revenue if there are results. We must continue enacting reforms to improve accountability. And we must raise new revenue to invest in projects that save lives, move people, and deliver goods throughout the state.

House Transportation Committee
Transportation Revenue Proposal
($'s in Millions)

Sources of Funding	**16 Year Total**
9.5¢ gas tax increase (3¢ 7/1/06 ,3¢ 7/1/07, 2¢ 7/1/08, 1.5¢ 7/1/09)	$5,545
Bond Proceeds	$5,100
Vehicle Weight Fee ($5 to $25 per vehicle, not restricted) Applies to Passenger Cars	$1,168
Light Trucks under 10,000 lbs. ($5 to $25 annually)	$429
Motorhomes ($75 annual fee)	$130
Various Drivers License & License Plate Fees	$405
Interest Income	$38
Total Sources of Funding	**$12,815**
1¢ Gas tax direct to Cities and Counties (1/2¢ and 1/2¢)	($602)
Debt Service	($3,792)
Total for State Projects and Programs	**$8,422**
Uses of Funding	
Alaskan Way Viaduct	($2,300)
SR 520 Bridge	($1,500)
Seismic Retrofit Bridges	($87)
Bridge Replacements	($340)
Concrete Replacement	($200)
Safety Projects	($422)
Ferries	($185)
Environmental	($112)
Local Freight Mobility Projects	($121)
Local Grant Programs	($80)
State Freight Mobility	($462)
Multi-Modal Improvements	($835)
Congestion Relief Projects	($1,659)
Total for Projects and Programs	**($8,302)**

Accountability

Taxpayers deserve to know their tax dollars are spent effectively and efficiently, for the right investments. The state has made great strides in accountability over the past four years:

- regular performance audits;
- new workplace efficiencies;
- a greater role for the private sector;
- streamlined permitting.

But more is needed to improve public confidence.

The Governor should have influence over the public policy decisions made at the Department of Transportation, just like she does throughout state government. She should be able to hold the Secretary of Transportation accountable for road project priorities, for projects that go over budget and for other transportation decisions. She cannot do so now, because the Governor does not have the authority to hire and fire the Secretary of Transportation. SB 5531 provides that authority, and at the same time holds the Governor accountable to the public for transportation policy. This measure will make sure the buck stops where it should – at the Governor's desk.

2005 accountability improvements include:

- Governor appoints Secretary of Transportation, and the Transportation Commission is phased out (SB 5513)
- Benchmarks – planning the best and most efficiently use our highways (HB 1969)
- Requiring timely payment of fuel taxes by petroleum refining companies to allow increased earnings from investments (SB 5058)

Accountability: Reporting to the Public

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) publishes a quarterly report providing in-depth reviews of agency and transportation system performance.

Measures, Markers and Mileposts is also known as the *Gray Notebook*, and can be viewed on the web at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability/GrayNotebook.pdf

Transportation Performance Audits

A new Transportation Accountability Commission will provide the public with an avenue for participation in transportation oversight, and will assume responsibility for performance reviews and audits of state and local transportation agencies. This expands on the work of the Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB), which was created in 2003 to ensure that tax dollars are used efficiently and effectively, and intended results are being achieved. TPAB is repealed.

TPAB has completed five major audits: WSDOT's capital management program, environmental permitting, highway and ferry programs, and transportation programs in the Dept. of Licensing and the Washington State Patrol.

Financial Audits by State Auditor

The State Auditor independently serves the citizens of Washington by promoting accountability, fiscal integrity and openness in state and local government.

State and local transportation agencies are audited yearly. Any problems are reported as findings. WSDOT and other transportation agencies are required to respond to audit findings, and report on actions taken to address deficiencies.

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) carries out independent performance audits, program evaluations, sunset reviews, and other policy and fiscal studies for the legislature and the citizens of Washington State. Recent transportation performance audits addressed WSDOT's aviation division and overall capital program, the ferry system, the highways and rail programs, and the Washington State Patrol.

Innovative Funding Sources

Traditional transportation funding sources are no longer sufficient to meet the entire transportation need throughout the state. The gas tax is not the robust funding source it once was. It cannot provide enough revenue to build, operate, preserve and maintain the system our state needs. And with the advent of clean cars and improved gas mileage throughout our vehicle fleet, the gas tax will become an even less reliable funding source. Therefore new financing tools are needed.

HB 1541 is a new law that enables public-private partnerships for state transportation projects. It is premised on projects being built and financed by tollpayers. Tolls are likely to be an important revenue source for critical transportation projects in Washington, as they are in many states.

Transportation Innovative Partnerships Act of 2005
HB 1541

The **Transportation Innovative Partnerships Act of 2005** is a new public-private partnership law for state transportation projects.

This new tool is needed because traditional funding methods are no longer sufficient to meet the state's entire needs.

It is available for use on all modes of transportation – highways, buses, public transportation, ferries and the like. Any project funded under this act must be publicly funded.

This act builds on lessons learned during the last 12 years' experience with our previous public-private initiative law.

- Projects will be selected because they are important public priorities – not just because they have the potential to make money.
- WSDOT will undertake a full analysis of proposed projects before accepting one to be funded under this new law.
- WSDOT will use the power of competition to get the best possible pricing for a project.
- The bill expands the use of the design-build process to speed up project delivery.

Tolling is Part of the Solution

Tacoma Narrows Bridge commuters already know tolls are in their future. They'll pay off the $800 million bridge debt with tolls for the next 25 years. If they have to pay tolls for their project, others should, too.

The legislature is set to approve HB 1179, which authorizes tolls for solo drivers on nine miles of SR 167 who wish to pay for the opportunity to use the HOV lane between Auburn and Renton.

The Puget Sound region's transportation needs far exceed available funding, and tolls will figure into the solution. They're already part of the financing plans to replace the SR 520 floating bridge; $700 million in tolls are anticipated. Tolls will also help finance the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

Tolling major highways and bridges has been suggested as a possible funding source for several major corridor projects in the region, and as part of the regional funding package, reducing the reliance on other funding sources.

Projects funded under the Transportation Innovative Partnerships Act of 2005 will be toll-financed. Possibilities include a new bridge crossing the Columbia River into Oregon, and the SR 520 floating bridge.

Alaskan Way Viaduct

The Alaskan Way Viaduct and the seawall under it are at the end of their useful lives, and must be replaced. They survived the 2001 Nisqually earthquake, but just barely. Engineers have posted load limits on the Viaduct; the next earthquake could close it down for good.

Regional mobility

The Viaduct is critical to regional mobility -- and to the state's economic vitality. Carrying more than 103,000 vehicles a day though Seattle -- a quarter of the north-south traffic -- it is a crucial link in the region's transportation system: a major commuter route, a freight corridor, a north-south highway through downtown Seattle, and a tie between neighborhoods and downtown.

Economic vitality

The Port of Seattle identifies the Viaduct as critical to the state's economic vitality. Freight moves through the corridor daily, serving the Port of Seattle, our nation's 6th largest container port. The Viaduct plays a critical role in providing mobility both for freight and other vehicles, as demonstrated after the Nisqually earthquake, when its closure left traffic a complete mess. Unable to use the Viaduct, traffic moves to I-5 and I-405 and other routes, clogging them to the point where neither freight nor commuters can reach their destinations.

Project Cost – Up to $4.1 billion	
2005 state contribution	$ 2.3 billion
2003 Nickel Package	$177 million
Regional and federal contribution, including seawall	Up to $ 1.6 billion
TOTAL	Up to $4.1 billion

Funding

Hopes that the federal government would bear a major share of the Viaduct and seawall replacement costs were dashed recently; it's now clear the state and region will pay most of these costs. Federal funds are still expected to finance most of the seawall portion of the project.

State funds will finance replacement of the existing structure, at a cost of $2.3 billion. Tolls will be part of the funding package. The City of Seattle wants the project to be tunneled; if so, they will finance the extra tunneling costs.

Traffic mitigation during construction

The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 includes $235 million to address traffic congestion during construction. This includes a $160 million investment in I-405; improvements to I-5 and SR 167; and a multi-modal project on SR 522 in North Seattle.

Project Timeline	
2006	Issue final Environmental Impact Statement
2007	Obtain final environmental approvals. Utility relocation begins.
2008	First phase design complete. Continued utility relocation.
2009	Begin construction.
2016	Project complete.

Other At-Risk Structures Across the State

SR 520 floating bridge – $1.5 billion
The Evergreen Point Floating Bridge is in as precarious a situation as the Alaskan Way Viaduct. It also has a 1 in 20 chance of failure in the next earthquake. In addition, it's highly vulnerable to storms. This investment plan includes $1.5 billion to replace the bridge, which is about half the total cost. The balance will be made up from tolls (currently estimated at $700 million), and a regional contribution.

Seismic retrofits for vulnerable bridges – $87 million
The Nickel Package funded seismic retrofits for a number of the state's most vulnerable bridges, whose columns need to be encased in steel to keep them from collapsing in an earthquake. But nearly 800 more bridges remain on the retrofit list. This package provides $87 million to speed up work on 157 of the most vulnerable bridges in earthquake zones.

Bridge replacements – $340 million
There are 139 bridges across the state that need to be replaced; load restrictions are posted on them due to structural deficiencies such as deteriorating columns, exposed and corroding steel rebar, and crumbling concrete beams. This package provides $340 million to replace the 27 bridges that the Department of Transportation has identified as the highest priority. The others will be addressed in the coming years within existing revenues.

At-Risk Structures

Additional Safety Projects

Nearly 600 people were killed on Washington roadways last year, and many more suffered debilitating injuries. The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 invests $482 million in safety projects, in an effort to make our roadways safer for all travelers.

Two-lane rural roads have been found to be the most dangerous traffic situations in the state. In 2002, there were nearly 2,000 fatal and disabling injury collisions on rural roadways, three times the rate per miles traveled as on urban roadways. This proposal spends $422 million to address these safety concerns, by fixing dangerous intersections, removing deadly fixed objects along roadways, flattening slopes, building passing lanes, realigning dangerous curves, improving intersection lighting, and similar safety improvements.

Sometimes small investments can make a big difference in reducing serious accidents. This package provides $8.9 million to install more than 80 miles of cable guard rails, which are designed to keep cars from crossing over divided highways and crashing into oncoming traffic. Pedestrian safety projects are funded at $30 million. Another $60 million will be invested in Safe Routes to Schools and transit stops.

Safety Projects

Preservation Projects

Concrete pavement repaving -- $200 million

The deterioration of many concrete road surfaces is becoming a major concern. Though solidly built, our interstate highways are reaching the end of their useful life and require resurfacing. More than half of our concrete pavements are more than 30 years old; some were built more than 60 years ago. Drivers know that rutting and cracking of the roadways are real safety issues. The 2003 Nickel Package provided $134 million to begin to replace I-5 concrete pavements. This package provides another $200 million to replace concrete pavement on I-90 from Snoqualmie Pass to Ellensburg.

Economic Development Projects

Transportation's link to economic development is vital. Roadways, airports, ferries, transit, ports, and railways are all necessary for a strong economy, providing access to businesses, jobs, and world markets, as well as moving freight, commerce and commuters.

The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 will create thousands of construction jobs and foster economic development throughout the state that will lead to many more jobs and better quality of life throughout the state.

Alaskan Way Viaduct

The Viaduct plays a critical role in providing mobility both for freight and other vehicles, as demonstrated after the Nisqually earthquake, when the Viaduct closure left traffic a complete mess. Access to the Port of Seattle is as important for eastern Washington's economic vitality as it is for western Washington commerce.

Snoqualmie Pass

I-90 is a major freight and transportation link connecting the Puget Sound to eastern Washington and the rest of the nation. Avalanches close the route several times each year. This package will fund a major project to improve safety and help keep the route open throughout the year, including a snowshed ($435 million), concrete pavement replacement, improved roadway alignment, and truck climbing lanes.

Freight mobility

In addition to the Snoqualmie Pass project, the Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 invests $167 million in more than 25 state and local freight mobility projects, including Lincoln Avenue grade separation at the Port of Tacoma, the city of Yakima's grade separated rail crossing, Walla Walla's US 12/SR 124 interchange, and Renton's Strander Blvd/SW 27th Street connection.

Freight rail

Nearly $10 million is invested in freight rail projects including the Geiger spur connection in Spokane County, and a critical junction in the Chehalis and Centralia area. Another $200,000 is provided as start-up funding to develop a new refrigerated produce rail car program that will improve the quality of Washington produce shipments.

Statewide rail study

State government is increasingly being asked to finance investments in private rail lines throughout the state in order to keep our freight rail system moving. This is a new endeavor for the state, and we need to better define the public sector's role. A $1 million study will help ensure any public investment in rail results in public benefits, and not solely private gain for rail companies.

Chokepoints and Congestion Relief

While the Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 focuses primarily on safety and preservation investments, it also earmarks $1.7 billion to address chokepoints and congestion relief. These investments build on the 2003 Nickel Package, which earmarked $3 billion of the $4 billion package for congestion relief.

HOV lanes -- $571 million

Two major projects are funded: I-5 HOV lanes in Pierce County between SR 16 and SR 167 ($425 million), and a $146 million project on SR 167 between SR 410 and 15th Street SW.

Construction mitigation – $235 million

The package includes $235 million to address traffic congestion during construction of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. This includes improvements to SR 167, a $160 million investment in I-405, improvements on I-5 north and south of the viaduct, and a multi-modal project on SR 522. In addition, nearly a half billion dollars worth of improvements on I-405, funded in the 2003 Nickel Package, will be advanced so they are completed by 2009, to help reduce traffic congestion caused by the construction of the Viaduct.

Congestion relief – $805 million

Thirty congestion relief projects are funded in the Transportation Improvement Act of 2005. Some of the major projects include the following:

- I-5/SR 161/SR 18 Triangle improvements in South King County – $100 million
- Widening I-5 south of Olympia -- $85 million
- New lanes on US 12 near Walla Walla – $36 million
- Widening SR 15 from Camas to Washougal, and building a new interchange – $40 million
- Widening US 101 in between Sequim and Port Angeles – $32 million
- A new alignment for SR 510 – the Yelm Loop – $33 million
- The Cross-Base Highway – $15 million
- SR 167 extension project (new freeway) -- $70 million
- The Columbia River Crossing in Vancouver – $50 million
- US 395, the North-South Freeway in Spokane – $56 million

Chokepoints and Congestion Relief

Public Transportation Investments

Efficient investments in public transportation can reduce congestion and improve the passenger capacity of our state highways and local roads. The state can and should provide valuable assistance to local transit agencies; HB 2124 enhances the state's role in planning and service coordination. New investments also are needed.

Transit grant program -- $400 million

This new program will provide grants to transit agencies for capital and operating needs. The new Regional Mobility Steering Committee created in HB 2124 will prioritize the grants and submit them to the legislature for approval. The grants will focus on areas such as "rush hour transit"-- moving more people through congested corridors; system connectivity; preserving, replacing or improving capital assets; park and ride lots, and similar activities.

Special needs grants for transit systems and non-profits – $55 million

This investment builds on the special needs grant program created in the 2003 transportation package. It finances local transit service for the elderly and disabled who depend on transit from public or non-profit transit organizations.

Commute trip reduction tax credits – $8 million

Commute trip reduction (CTR) tax credits encourage employers to create programs that reduce drive-alone commuting. The tax credit leverages public resources to encourage employers to invest more in alternative transportation for their employees. This proposal modifies the current tax credit law to make it accessible to small and medium-sized employers. Coupled with the increase in the total credit, these changes will make it attractive for more employers who are not participating in the state's CTR program to join in that effort.

Safe routes to schools and transit – $60 million

Bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities are 14% of all transportation-related fatalities in Washington. In almost half of these fatalities, marked crossings were not available. Many were along transit routes or involved children walking or biking to school. Between 1995 and 2000, there were 1,800 collisions between motor vehicles and pedestrians, with 175 pedestrians killed and nearly 400 others disabled.

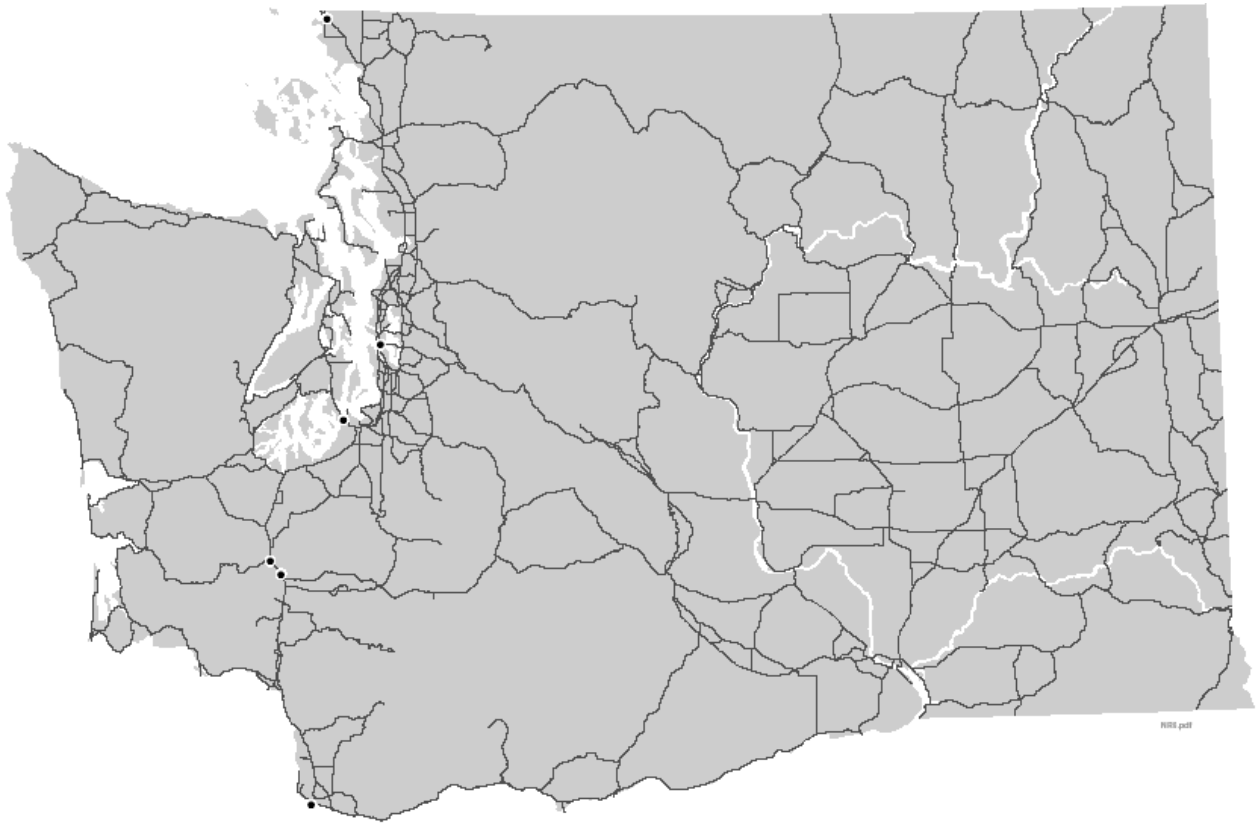
The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 will increase investments in the Safe Routes to Schools program, providing grants to school districts to improve walking and biking routes. These investments will help prevent tragic accidents. They also will encourage students to get more exercise; reduce car trips; and create public amenities that enhance quality of life and make neighborhoods more attractive places to live and raise families. Safe routes to transit investments will address roadway deficiencies to make them safer for pedestrians and bicycle riders.

Passenger rail – $97 million

Since 1994, the State of Washington has worked closely with Amtrak to develop regional intercity service between Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B. C, commonly known as Amtrak *Cascades*. The state finances the costs of these regional runs, which provide dependable service to ten intermediate communities. Ridership on Amtrak *Cascades* has grown by more than 600% in the past decade.

The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 invests $97 million in capital improvements to overhaul trainsets and speed train service by building Phase 1 of the Point Defiance by-pass near Tacoma, and making track improvements at King Street Station and in the Chehalis area, near Newakum and near Blaine.

Passenger Rail Projects



The Ferry System

For people who live on islands and peninsulas, bridges and ferries are their state highways. Efficient movement of people across the water is part of the core mission of the state transportation agency. A multi-modal transportation system is just as important on water as it is on land, to ensure efficient movement of people.

Washington State Ferries (WSF) is the largest ferry transit system in the country, serving 24 million passenger and vehicle trips per year on 10 ferry routes that run nearly 500 sailings a day. Service is provided to eight Washington State counties and the province of British Columbia. The system includes 20 terminals spread across the Central Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands, and Sidney, B.C.

Ferry capital improvements -- $185 million

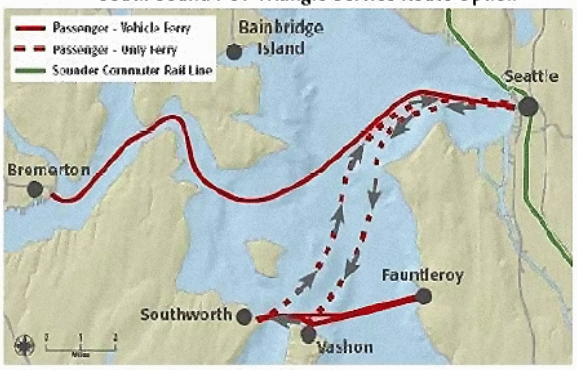
The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 makes investments in the ferry system to preserve terminals at Fauntleroy, Bainbridge Island and Port Townsend that have serious deficiencies, and to replace the worn out Hyak vessel, built in 1967.

Passenger-only ferries

This budget keeps the state in the passenger-ferry business, because it is in the taxpayers' and the state's best interest to do so.

In 2004, the legislature directed the Department of Transportation to develop a long-term strategy to maximize efficient delivery of marine transportation service. WSDOT concluded that while it makes sense for the private sector to operate passenger-only ferries from Bremerton and Kingston to Seattle, it is more effective for the Washington State Ferries to provide passenger-only service on a triangle route connecting Seattle, Vashon Island and Southworth. This generates the most fare revenue for the state system, keeps more cars out of downtown Seattle, avoids putting more cars through the overcrowded Fauntleroy terminal, and increases the likelihood of state taxpayers benefitting from federal ferry capital and operating grants.

Figure ES-1
South Sound POF Triangle Service Route Option



Source: Washington State Ferries, Berk & Associates, 2004

Ferry unions have agreed to a part-time schedule that provides more flexibility and cost efficiency than the current schedule and, when combined with a $1 roundtrip fare increase, will lead to 72% farebox recovery. This is nearly triple the current 27% farebox recovery on the Vashon-Seattle route.

The service will be operated with the two fast ferries – the Chinook and the Snohomish – that have been idle since the Bremerton passenger-only service closed down. The state will invest $3 million to upgrade the two vessels and make some improvements at the Southworth and Vashon terminals.

Local and Regional Investments

Washington's transportation crisis is also a local crisis. Cities and counties have seen expenses rise while funding has been cut drastically through initiatives and the resulting loss of state funds.

- Larger economic centers need major improvements for congestion relief, freight mobility, and earthquake protection.
- Many mid-sized and smaller cities serve as a through corridor for commuting workers, resulting in extraordinary congestion.
- Small rural communities are unable to fund the most basic resurfacing projects and cannot afford even modest improvements to their streets without state assistance.
- Eastern Washington cities face freeze/thaw cycles that accelerate street deterioration.

Counties are in no better shape, and need funding for preservation, maintenance, safety improvements, construction and local freight improvements in order to maintain and improve the system.

In short, local governments need new money.

A penny for local governments -- $602 million

The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 provides a new direct funding stream to local governments to help finance local transportation needs. They receive a penny of the fuel tax increase.

Local grant program – $80 million

The Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) funds high priority transportation projects in communities throughout the state to enhance the movement of people, goods and services. Typically these grants are partnerships, and TIB grants are matched by other funds from local government and other sources. This is a highly popular program, but requests outpace funding by 800% (8:1).

The County Road Administration Board (CRAB) operates two grant programs for county roads that improve freight haul and access to local markets. Mobility and safety needs also are addressed.

The Transportation Improvement Act of 2005 appropriates $56 million to TIB for grants to local governments and $24 million to CRAB for grants for county roads. These grants will generate local matching funds, thereby maximizing the state's investment.

Local freight mobility grants – $140 million

A total of $140 million is appropriated for nearly 30 local freight mobility projects prioritized by the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board. These projects facilitate freight movement between and among local, national and international markets, enhancing trade opportunities. Typically these grants leverage considerable additional investments; the state's $140 million will be matched 5:1, for a total transportation investment in excess of $600 million.

Regional Partnerships

A workable regional funding strategy -- HB 2157

The transportation safety and congestion problems in the Central Puget Sound can't be solved by state revenue alone, so a workable regional funding strategy is essential. It's been three years since the legislature authorized King, Pierce and Snohomish counties to jointly form the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) and raise several billion dollars in local option taxes for important regional projects.

The RTID has failed its core assignment because it is structurally flawed. It restricts investment to a narrow mix of projects, and provides the wrong set of local option taxes. Polls show the voters don't want a roads-only transportation fix, and don't want to be forced to spend sales taxes on roads. Yet that's essentially what RTID proposed. Furthermore, the Central Puget Sound can't spend $13 billion and *not* fix the most dangerous structure in the state, the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

HB 2157 corrects these flaws and provides a workable regional funding strategy. It creates the Regional Transportation Improvement Authority (RTIA) to replace RTID, with a more inclusive governing body, and with broader authority to select projects and funding sources that meet the region's needs. It requires the Puget Sound Regional Council, the region's planning authority, to develop the plan for the ballot. Finally, it establishes a Regional Transportation Governance Commission to make recommendations to the 2006 legislature on how to streamline future transportation planning and investment decisions within the region.

Local option transportation funding for the rest of the state – SB 5177

SB 5177 gives cities and counties throughout the state, including the Puget Sound, the opportunity to raise money locally to improve their transportation systems. It allows cities and counties to propose transportation improvement districts to fund transportation improvements on highways of statewide significance or local roads and streets. The House amended the bill to give local government the tools they need to design a ballot measure that reflects local transportation needs and desires, including multi-modal solutions, so long as they reduce facility risk, improve safety, improve travel time and capacity, and optimize system performance.